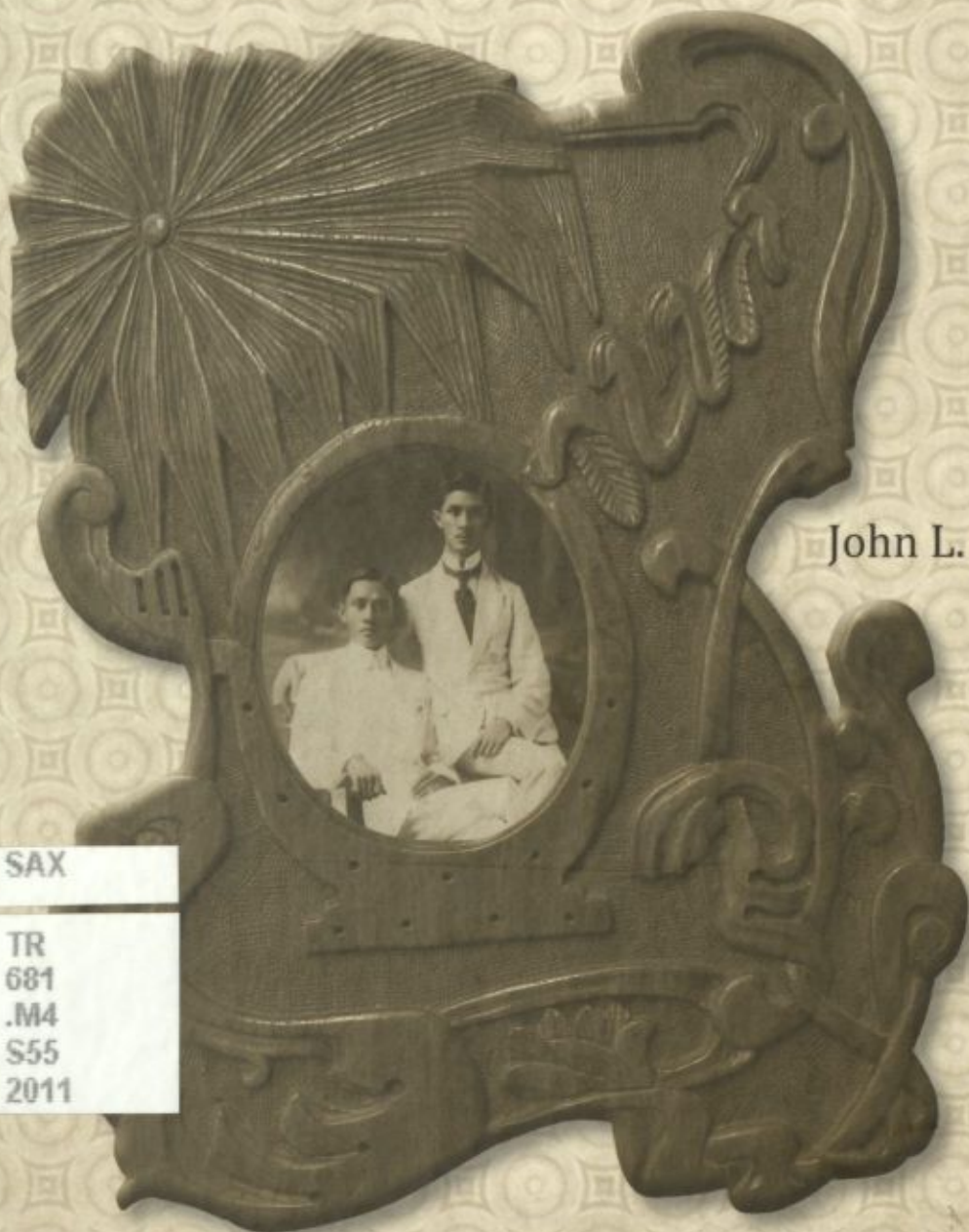


# *A Token of our Friendship*

PHILIPPINE PHOTOS OF MALE AFFECTION • FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY



John L. Silva

SAX

TR  
681  
.M4  
S55  
2011



One seated on Roman style chair, the other on the chair's arm.

Both suited with high folded collars. C. 1920

Stamp: Sun Studio, Manila

Jonathan Best Collection

# *A Token of our Friendship*



## Philippine Photos of Male Affection

FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

John L. Silva



***A Token of Our Friendship***

*Philippine Photos of Male Affection*

*First Half of the 20th Century*

by John L. Silva

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Special thanks to Teresita Ang Sy for translating the Chinese inscriptions on two of the photos.



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## NOTES ON PHOTO CAPTIONS

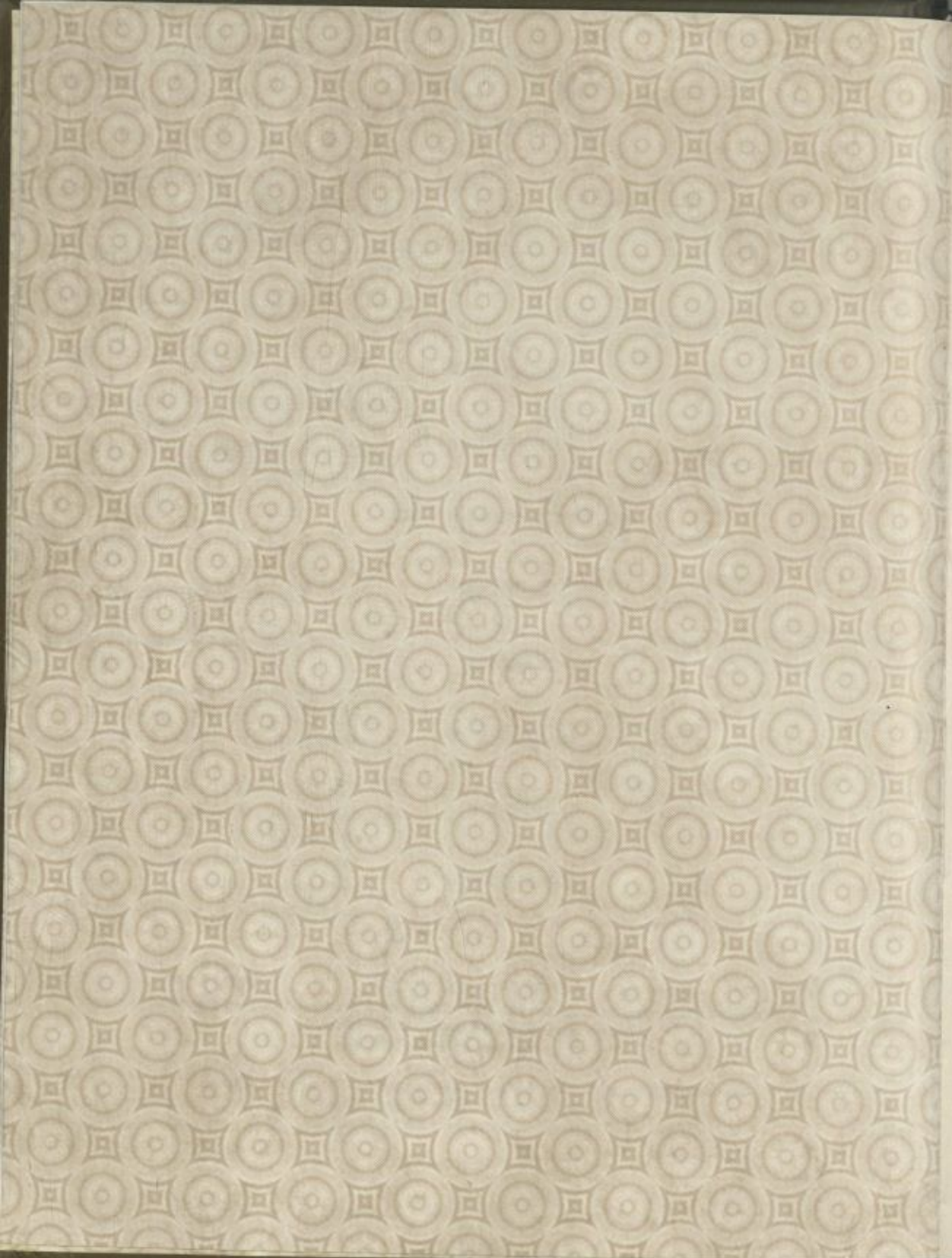
Unless stated on the page, the subject matter, the photographer or the photo studio are unknown.

Jonathan Best ownership is stated on loaned photos.

The rest are from the John L. Silva collection.

All photographs are gelatin silver prints. Most photographs are Real Photo Postcards, the standard dimensions are 5 1/2 x 3 1/2."

Others are of smaller dimensions from 3 1/2 x 2," to 4 1/2 x 2 3/4."



For Jonathan





Suited gentlemen, faux pelt art nouveau chair and bamboo backdrop, C. 1920

# Foreword



This book was born as a gift to two people.

Having known John Silva and Jonathan Best, first as photography collectors, and then later as good friends, Rachel Rillo and I gifted them with a picture book. Entitled "*Dear Friends, American Photographs of Men Together, 1840 - 1918*" by David Deitcher. It was a collection of photographs that recorded affection and love between men of that period.

Immediately, John said, "Oh, I have lots of photographs like these!"

Knowing that John and Jonathan own one of the largest and most extensive vintage Philippine photography collection, so was born the idea to show this narrative, of the bonds between men in our Philippines.

The photos were catalogued and listed: whether they were best of friends or brothers, brief companions or long-time lovers, solo portraits or class photos, John has assembled a collection of images that document these universal and timeless relationships. What you are now holding is "*A Token of Our Friendship, Philippine Photos of Male Affection, First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.*"

The inscriptions on the reverse of these images, acting as explanations, and sometimes as code, are most revealing of the intentions of the sitter. In one favorite, a mix between ambiguous declaration of hope, and a poetic desire to preserve the moment:

*"To Joe, to remain unmoved by the storm of time."*

The photographs are great studies of fashion, hairstyles, and attitudes. The studio photos with the elaborate backdrops that mimic what must have been exotic places to the Filipino circa 1920, are so telling of what was deemed extraordinary.

The photographers' ways of shooting, the sitters' carriages, the backdrops against which they are photographed, combine set design and performance, a film still if you will. Or an earnest need to be recorded as a man in his prime, with someone important to him.

Photographs that documented these affectionate portraits in the Philippines, and the collectors that scour flea markets and junk shops almost a century later, keep history alive. They are cultural documentation, and more importantly, as reminders that the gestures of affection line our personal histories, genetic markers on the pages of Philippine history.

The photographs in this book are presented in the Silverlens Gallery as John Silva's third exhibition of his collection. In 2005, John presented photographs of the Manila at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> c; in 2007, he presented his own family history; this time, he shares with us a corner of his collection, some of them owned by Jonathan, that is simultaneously universal and personal. We are grateful to you John, for making this simple gift grow a thousand-fold.

**Isa Lorenzo**

Silverlens Gallery

Manila

May 20, 2011







Northern Philippine tribe, ascribed as Gaddang, C. 1900  
Jonathan Best Collection



# Introduction



In the course of collecting and researching vintage photographs for the past 30 years, I would chance upon a picture of two men in embrace, holding hands and projecting a feeling of friendship and affection. Their poses setting them apart from most photographs of men stiffly arranged with space between them, caught my eye.

In some of these affectionate photographs there are inscriptions on the back that clue us to the poses. Most often the handwriting reveals the photo to be a "token" of friendship often accompanied with entreaties about remembering one another. In a few rare cases, there are declarations of love.

The advent of photography in 1839 ushered in images on glass, tin and later albumen paper that were precise likenesses of people, places, and events. There was now certitude in a person's face and dressing. Far-off wonders like the Pyramids were seen exactly as they looked in London drawing rooms. Earthquake damage, a typhoon's wrath and dead bodies from wars in all their gruesome state exacted a heightened collective conscience for the curious viewers.

In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century photography studios flourished first in Europe and the United States and later extended to other parts of the world. The photograph as a wondrous invention capturing the world's likeness took on a more personal use. People flocked to the studios to have images of themselves as mementos to be given to friends and loved ones. They posed alone, in pairs or in groups.

I was drawn to rare images of men who posed for the camera with the intention of conveying affection. Being gay, I strongly felt that such images acknowledged if not celebrated male love, even if such a love might not include sex. I also noted that displays of male affection on camera were acceptable and more pronounced during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, declined after World War II and reappeared again in the world-wide student rebellion of the mid and late sixties. Included in that rebellion was gay liberation.

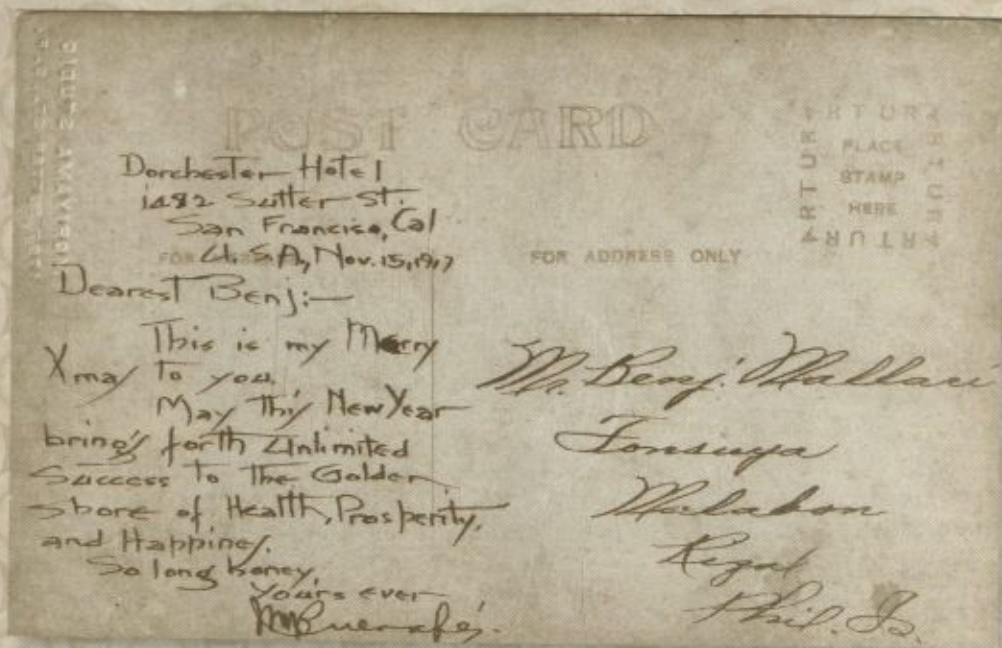




Today, showing one's affection to each other as men is taken naturally. But a hundred years ago, given Victorian morality and its Draconian laws that punished homosexual practices, which still have lingering powers in former colonies in Asia and Africa, affectionate photographs were rare, restrained, measured or in most cases, completely avoided.

In 1917 the noted British author, E. M. Forster had his first fulfilling sexual friendship with a young man named Mohammed while living in Alexandria, Egypt. It was a passionate and mutual relationship after years of unsatisfying friendships. He would have an epiphany over the affair and in a letter to his female confidante Florence Berger, writes his realization seeing "...beyond my own happiness and intimacy, occasional glimpses of the happiness of 1000s of others whose names I shall never hear, and I know there is a great unrecorded history."

This picture book containing the visual images of men who loved each other from friendship to sexual intimacy is a step in recording their history.



Inscription on verso for photo (page 24 top left):

Dorchester Hotel  
1482 Sutter St.  
San Francisco Cal  
U.S.A., Nov. 15, 1917

Dearest Benj:-

This is my Merry Xmas to you,  
May this New Year bring forth unlimited success to the Golden Shore of Health,  
Prosperity and Happiness.

So long honey,

Yours ever

J.M. Buenafe

Addressed to: Mr. Benj Mallari  
Tonsuya, Malabon, Rizal, Phil. Is.

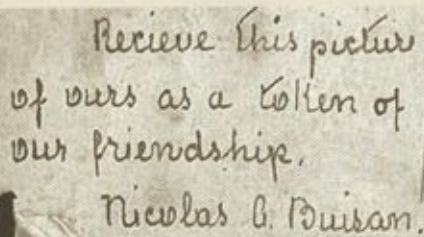
Embossed: Moriyama Studio, 1757 Sutter St. S.F.



# Inscriptions on the Back



Most of the real photo cards I collected had no inscriptions on the back and my appreciation of them is limited. The value of a card is enhanced immensely when it contains a written message. A photo studio's embossed logo with a name and address helps greatly, providing a clue to the photographer's location, popularity and date. A studio stamp was sometimes placed on the back.



Recieve this picture  
of ours as a token of  
our friendship.  
Nicolas G. Buisan.

Inscribed messages on the back of the cards add context and meaning to the photograph. A date on a card can help explain the style of clothing worn, the subject matter and even the language used. Earlier cards were written in Spanish, the subjects richer and more educated in appearance, and the poses formalistic. Later images were apt be in English or Filipino, the subjects more varied, the dress more casual, more scenes outdoors and the poses expressive and spontaneous.

The few images found and inscribed in Spanish were florid and formal while those in English were in verses lifted perhaps from valentine cards or copied from sentimental quotations on friendship. Inscriptions in Filipino were poetic, plaintive, and heartfelt, the degree of affection measured.

The name of the person in the salutation identifies the gender but in many cases, the Filipino proclivity for nicknames make identification difficult. Specific titling like cousin, brother, sister, honey, or loved one indicates the kind and level of intimacy in the inscription.

Fountain pens were commonly used for writing before 1950 but there were some who used pencils, these two different modes of writing revealing the class and educational background of the writer.

Photographs captured the expressed affection of men, with a restraint coinciding with the period. Written words of affection were more enigmatic and if the love object was another man, they were sparsely written. There was no cultural base encouraging the meticulous and honest writing about male affection. That would have to wait until the liberating changes of the 1960's and 1970's.

A young man in a suit with a high collar poses and with piercing eyes looks directly at the camera. He is handsome with perfectly combed hair and full lips. It is a Sun Studio photograph, a Japanese owned company which operated in the twenties and thirties in Manila, known for encouraging its clients to strike artistic poses. The background used for the photo is a hazy image of a garden with steps leading up to classical columns. The lower part of the picture fades to black giving it an ethereal look.

The back of the photo card has an inscription addressed to an Ismael Mallari of Malabon Rizal, P. I. (Philippine Islands). In the Palmer Method style of handwriting, it reads:

"Let the tender grace of our companionship not take wings and fly away from your memory. This picture is to perpetuate that memory of our happy school days."

—Roman Santos



Stamped on the back: Sun Studio, Manila, C. 1920

Two men in white summer suits, one wearing a long tie, the other a bowtie are posed together, one seated on a settee, the other seated on the armrest. One man's arm affectionately rests across the other's back, the hand firmly on his shoulder gently tugging the other to his side. Their pose is comfortable and there is a feeling of friendship.

On the back of the card, an inscription is written in an upswept style in artistic block letters.



Embossed: Sun Studio, Manila

Jose:

"Maliit at dahop na alay, datapuat, Buhay at sariwa kailan man."

Pepe

August 25/28

{ Translation:

Jose,

"Petite and needy souvenir, nevertheless, alive, timely and forever."

Pepe

August 25/28)

Unfortunately, Jose or Pepe is unidentified in the picture.



An early photo card, circa 1905, with both image and dedication on the same side is a very rare declaration of love from an Alfred to a Pablo. Alfred is at his desk writing with his pen, an open ink bottle on the side. He is wearing a collarless shirt and the photo is taken inside a thatched hut. The photographer has measured the light inside so as not to render Alfred in silhouette. He has also cropped the photo into an oval vignette suggesting intimacy.

Alfred writes in Tagalog, a language from the island of Luzon later to become the base for Filipino, the national language.

Pablo:

*Saiyo tangi at mahal kong kaybigan  
Sayo'y boong puso kong iniaalay  
Tuloy nagnanais na ang kapalaran  
Ay sumaiyo nga habang nabubuhay*

Alfred

Translation:

Pablo:

I am fated to you my friend and love  
To you I offer all my heart  
I continue to wish that good fortune  
Be with you as long as you live

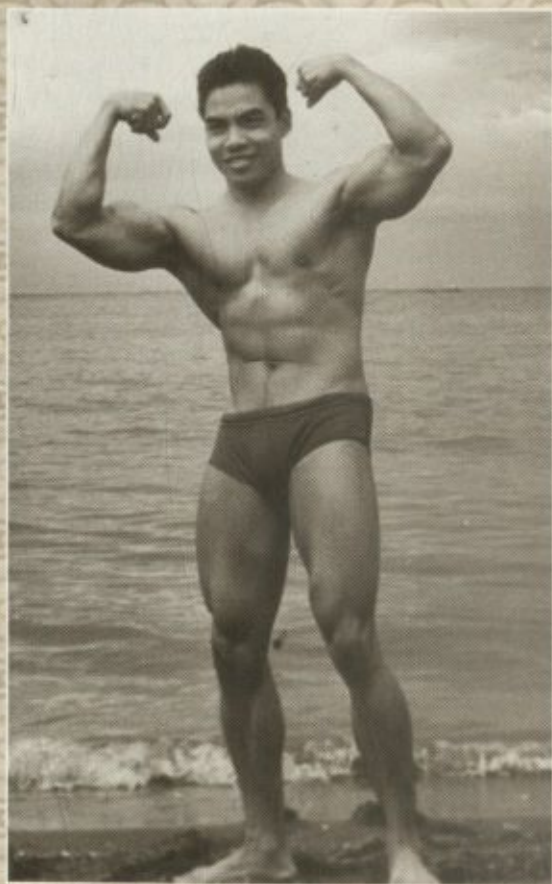
Alfred



Pablo:

Saiya tangis si  
mahal kong baybigan  
Saiya boongkuso  
kong ini aalay  
Tuloy nagnanais  
na ang kapalaran,  
ay sumainip nga  
habang... alibuhay  
Alfred





Muscleman at the beach. C. 1959



# Solo Images



In the early days of photography, wealthy gentlemen had studio portraits taken of themselves and mounted on 2 1/2" x 4" inch cards called *cartes de visite*. They were used to introduce oneself to business prospects or to society. As photography studios flourished and the cost of a studio portrait became more reasonable almost anyone could afford to have a photo taken as a keepsake or souvenir.

The photograph as a memento became the overarching reason for the sitting, cutting across class and professional lines. From the national hero Jose Rizal, who had numerous solo portraits taken of himself, to sailors far away, photographs were sent with beseeching messages to be remembered and not forgotten. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when people were separated from one another due to work or study or when moving from the province to a new life in the city, an exchange of photographs occurred.

By 1910, hundreds of Filipino men were hired to be stewards, mess boys and assistant cooks for the U.S. Navy. Thousands more were arriving in Hawaii, California, Washington State, and Alaska, to work as field hands or cannery workers. By 1930, there were over 120,000 Filipinos working mostly in the United States. On their weekends off, they would go to photo studios in their sartorial best, have their pictures taken to send to loved ones and yearning sweethearts.

The photographs, though meant to assure the viewer of their success, were poignant mirages hiding the low pay they actually received and the hard working conditions they were subjected to. Standards of beauty in a Caucasian society with a racial pecking order marginalized the Malay features of Filipinos. In response, Filipinos tried to pose even more nobly and with more assurance, mimicking the stance of prosperous businessmen with three-piece suits and gold watches. In a few cases there were images with inscriptions of contentment having adapted to the American dream.



J.M. Buenafe in a banker's  
three-piece suit with a rounded  
high collar. Nov. 1917  
Inscription on verso and  
embossment, see page 16.

Solo portraits were also a form of expressing affection. In a modest society that shied away from physical displays of affection and directness in expressing feelings, a photograph could be a useful surrogate for a bashful suitor.

Some portraits contain poses with the subject looking downward or to the side affecting an air of vulnerability, a subtle plea for love. Self-effacing messages on the back saying the photograph as inadequate or a modest likeness are recurrent.

Others stare dreamily into the camera in an attempt to convey a feeling - seduction perhaps - or a declaration of devotion in no uncertain terms.

The photo portrait was ideal for the more artistic poseurs, often homosexuals, with coy smiles, impeccable suits, legs crossed in the continental style, arms draped over chairs, and hands in calculated repose.

A small body of photographs exist revealing semi-nude men displaying fine physiques. The body beautiful, whose popularity began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as "physical culture," would later be employed as an object for sexual and, perhaps, amorous attraction. In the 1950's homegrown gyms opened in cities and towns, bodybuilding flourished and the Filipino body would also be the object of photographic attention.

The male sitter posing alone faced a host of challenges when attempting to convey endearment. Those posing with their special friend or in a group could use one another as their object of affection. The single sitter on the other hand, was alone before the unforgiving lens and had only a limited number of shots to try to emote his deepest feelings within the confines of strict social etiquette. All this had to be achieved without even having the intended recipient of his affections before him. It took a plucky man indeed.





Inscription front: Sincerely, Ben

Inscription on verso:

Feb. 4, 1930

San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Curing,

May your heart be a flower pot, where I  
may plant the word Forget-Me-Not.

Yours

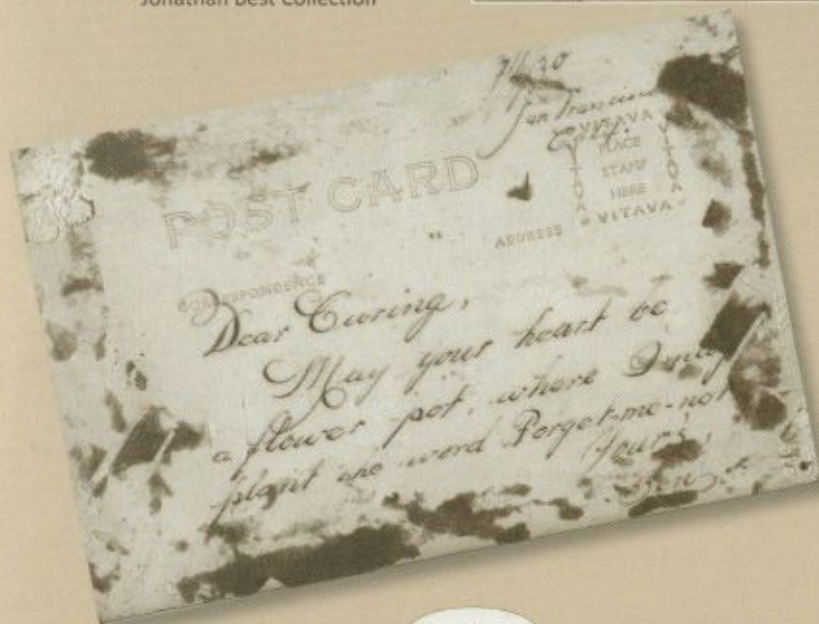
Ben

Embossed: Moriyama Studio

1797 Sutter St., S.F.

(A favorite photo studio of  
Filipinos in California)

Jonathan Best Collection







Christmas greeting on Real Photo Postcard. Young man in photo inset. C. 1925



Suited young man seated on bench. Loggia backdrop.

Inscription on verso: 1-31-20

*Ala-ala ko sa maginang Sara at Luching. Ang nakalarawan*  
(Remembrance for mothers Sara and Luching. From the one pictured)

Addressed to: Bb. Sinforosa Bautista

J. Sulu, Sta. Cruz City



Inscribed in front: Sincerely Yours, Eddie  
Stenciled decoration on the corners. C. 1915





Young man in striped suit with high collar. C. 1920  
Embossed "C. Valdezco. Ave. Rizal - Manila"



Embossed: Sun Studio, Manila

Inscription on verso:

*To Pinang, Purihin mo'y huag pintasin Tanggapin mo lang itong larawan ko. Temong*  
(Praise, do not criticise just accept my photo)





Manila dandy. C. 1915

Embossed: Liwayway Studio, de E.A.  
Marcos, Manila

Inscription on verso:

"Mendoza"

*Tanggapin mo itong aking ala ala saiyo.*

C. Petrance







Leaning on a column, C. 1930

Inscription on verso:  
 My humble snap,  
 Is not worth adoring  
 Nor it seems to be pleasing,  
 But the sincerity of a friend,  
 Will always and always remain  
 Merto

To, Parino,  
 My humble snap,  
 Is not worth adoring,  
 Nor it seems to be  
 pleasing,  
 But the sincerity of  
 a friend,  
 Will always and  
 always remain,  
 Merto

Handsome man in white suit and  
bow tie. C. 1915

Embossed: Amor Studio,  
Padre Rada, Manila

Inscription on verso:  
Maeng: -

I am offering this poor picture of mine  
to you & co. as a token of my devoted  
friendship with you & as my heart's  
gratitude & appreciation of  
having found a friend at last who will  
be my friend once & for all.

Martin

Addressed to: Mr. Ismael Mallari & Co.  
Tonsuya, Malabon, Rizal, P.I.



## POST CARD

FOR MESSAGE

FOR ADDRESS ONLY

Maeng: -

I am offering this  
poor picture of mine  
to you & co. as a  
token of my devoted  
friendship with you &  
as my heart's gratitude  
& appreciation of having  
found a friend at last  
who will be my friend  
once & for all.  
Martin.

Mr. Ismael Mallari & Co.  
Tonsuya, Malabon,  
Rizal, P. I.

ARTUR  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE  
ARTUR





Sailor's reminder. C. 1915

Inscription on verso:

Mr. Serrano

To you my dear friend receive this  
picture of mine as to remember to you  
by the pass (sic) year.

Oct. 24-1915  
Mr. Serrano  
to you my dear friend  
receive this picture  
of mine as to remem-  
ber to you by the  
pass year



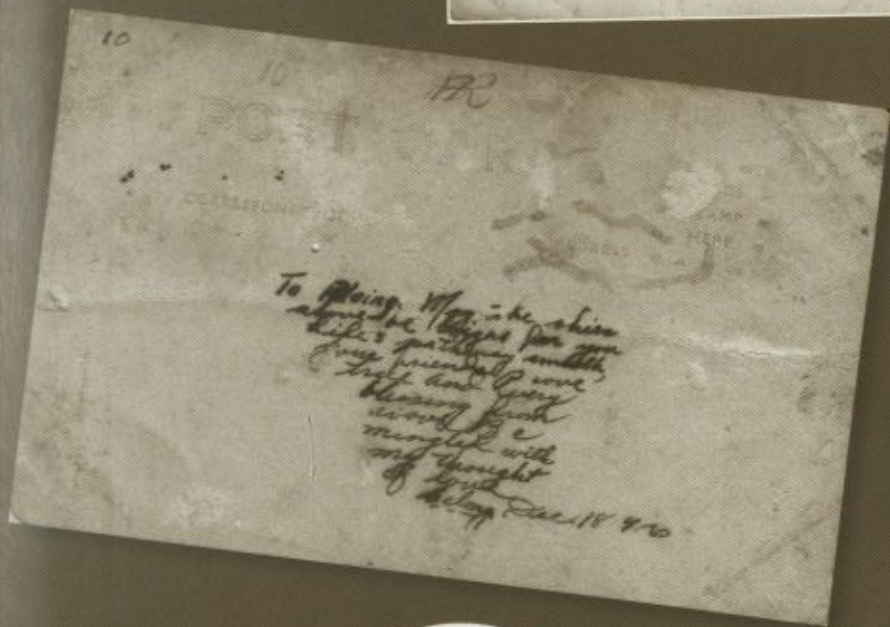
Young man in white suit and bow-tie,  
half-seated on Chinese pedestal.

Inscription on verso:

To Ploing,

May the skies above be bright for you  
Life's pathway smooth, your friends prove  
true, and every blessing from above, Be  
mingled with my thought of love.

Belong Dec. 18, 1916





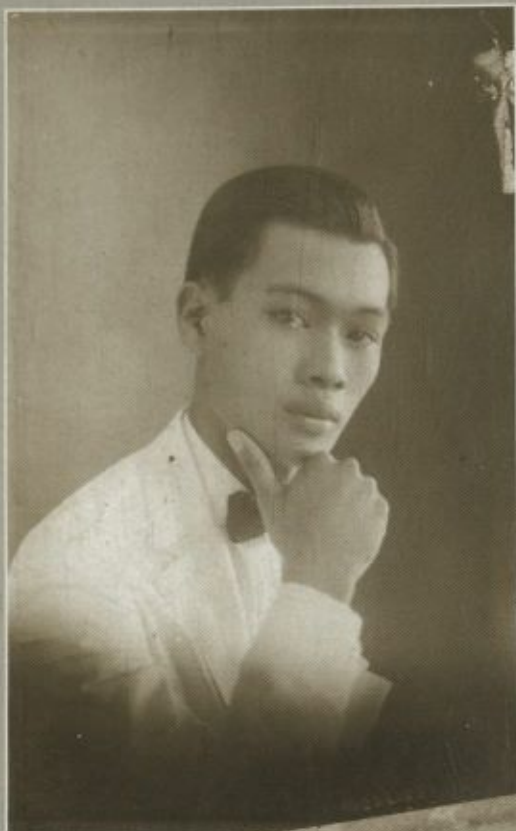
Sibul Springs souvenir photo. C. 1935  
(Famous resort in the '30's located in Bulacan province.)





University cadet in formal uniform, C. 1925  
Embossed: Sun Studio, Manila





A questioning gaze.

Embossed: Moonlight Studio. C. 1915

Inscription on verso:

*Alaala ko sainyong lahat.*

Pepe

(A remembrance for all.)

Jonathan Best Collection.



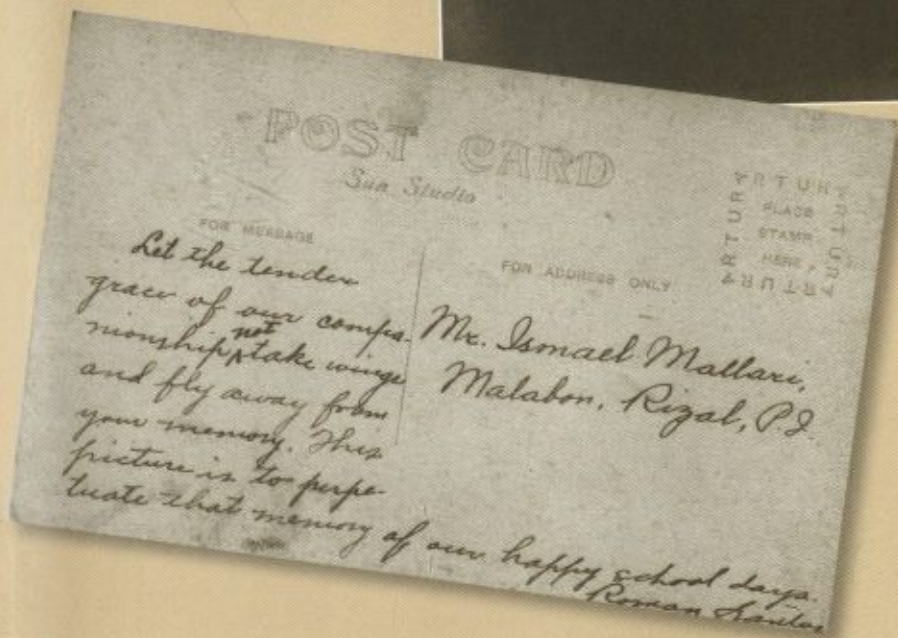
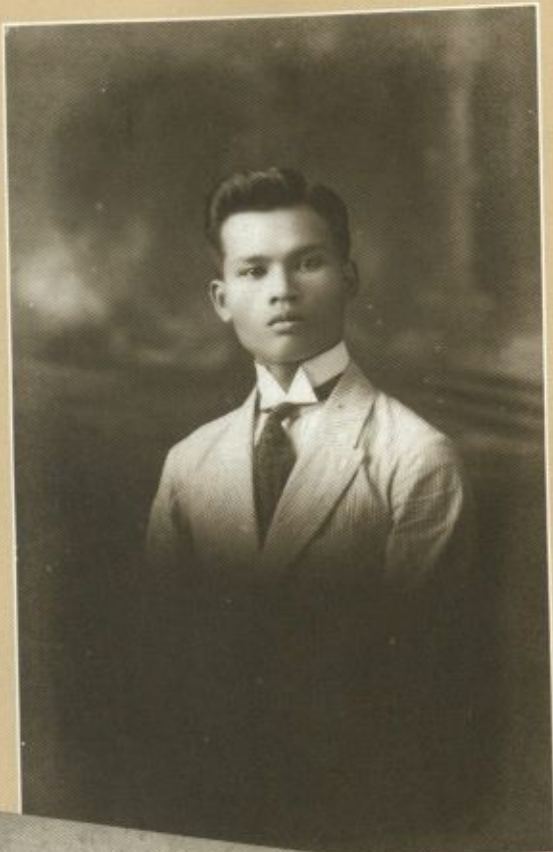
Roman Santos in a wing shirt collar  
and suit, C. 1918.

Inscription on verso:  
Let the tender grace of our companionship  
not take wings and fly away from your  
memory. This picture is to perpetuate that  
memory of our happy school days.  
Roman Santos

Addressed to: Mr. Ismael Mallari  
Malabon, Rizal, P.I.

(Mr. Mallari, a teacher, received many  
photos with affectionate messages from  
handsome male friends in the country  
and abroad.)

Jonathan Best Collection





Young man in white suit and tie posed in continental fashion  
on an arm chair. C. 1920

Embossed: Moonlight Studio, Manila, P.I.

Inscription on verso: Pencilled writing faded and obstructed by glued backing.  
Parts of message in Tagalog include salutations to all and especially his mother and to  
forgive him for sending an ugly picture. Signature illegible.





Young man in Barong with front floral designs and a neck kerchief.  
Seated on tasseled chair, with one slipper dangling on his feet. C. 1925

Inscription on verso:

Luding,

*Matamis na alaala ng iyong pinsan si Cecilio de Cuna.*

(Luding, a sweet remembrance from your cousin Cecilio de Cuna)



Pensive gaze and pose.

Embossed: Venus Studio, Manila

Inscription on verso:

March 25, 1934

*Ala ala kay Goring,*

Ciniong

(Illegible Alcantara

Kiropractico

Pagsanjan, Laguna)

(A remembrance for Goring from Ciniong)







Dapper gentleman in white suit with shirt wing collar and brooch.  
Seated continental style on Roman design chair. Loggia backdrop. C. 1920

Embossed: Escalante Studio, San Roque Cavite.

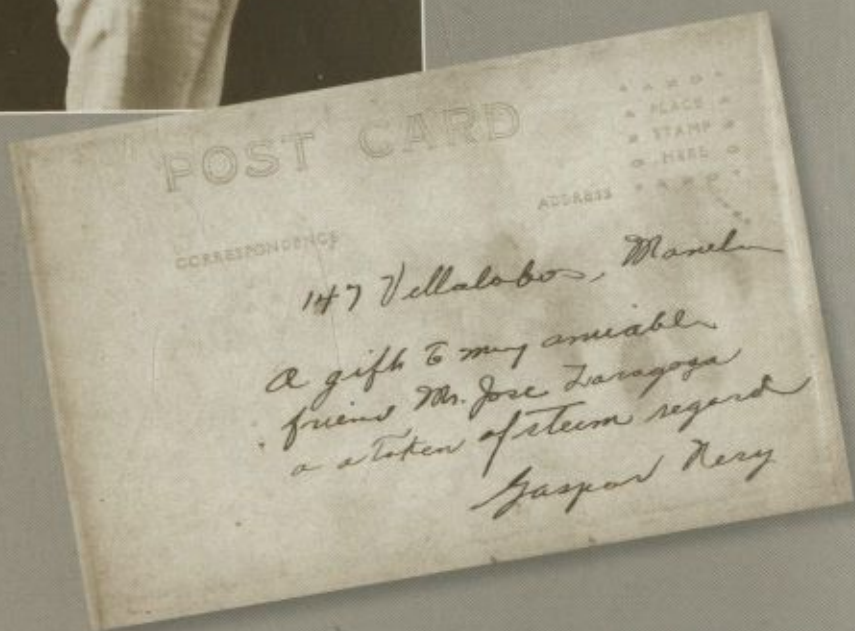




Using one's physique as  
memento, C. 1925

Inscription on verso:  
147 Villalobos, Manila  
A gift to my amiable friend Mr. Jose  
Zaragoza as a token of esteem regard.

Gaspar Nery





Impressing his host with his physique, C. 1960.  
Inscription on verso: Taken at Mr. Esteban's residence on ..."



Suited gentleman grasping soldier, C. 1930



# Couples



Demonstrations of affection between two men in a studio setting at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century present a wide range of emotions, from the subtle to the most revealing which are not possible to find in solo poses.

These pairs, be they brothers, fathers and sons, close friends, and lovers all bare a measured love before a photographer who they probably never met before. The photographs' only role was to record a lasting image. In almost all the photographs, both men gaze directly at the camera discreetly sharing their affection and witnessed by an anonymous lens.

There is an apparent formality in photos of fathers and sons. Brothers posing are more intimate suggesting shared experiences, younger brother showing more deference and respect to older brother as is the custom. The older will usually have his arm protectively around the younger's shoulder.

Among friends, a hand draped over a shoulder is a carefully considered gesture; there is usually no grip, rather, a wrist rests on the shoulder. This is the most prevalent sign of physical affection.

Other signs of affection include shoulders pressed against each other, heads inclined towards one another, holding of hands, the hand or the arm resting on the other's thigh, arms around waists, and arms resting on shoulders. More intimate photographs show men standing to the side and behind with the other seated, the former having his arms encircling the other.

Often, a picture may have two men tightly posed, yet one can discern from the angle of one man's shoulder that his hand is embracing the other man's back or shoulder.

Studio photographs were carefully planned. The fashionable suits during the first decades of the twentieth century were "tropical whites". These could even be rented at the studio or brought there and put on for the occasion, with folds still showing in

the freshly donned trousers. If one decided on a bowtie, the other would invariably wear a long tie. If the photograph is from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the subjects often wore shirts with high collars, reminiscent of Chinese collars worn and popularized by famous Filipino heroes. In a few instances, dark suits were worn. However, it is rare to find the posers wear three-piece suits. Three-piece suits were mostly worn by Filipinos working in the United States as domestics, cooks, cannery, and farm workers. The full regalia implied success and well-being and were sent back to families in the Philippines to impress them.

Numerous photographs of Filipino sailors in U.S. Navy uniforms attest to the thousands working as stewards, mess boys and cooks just before and after World War

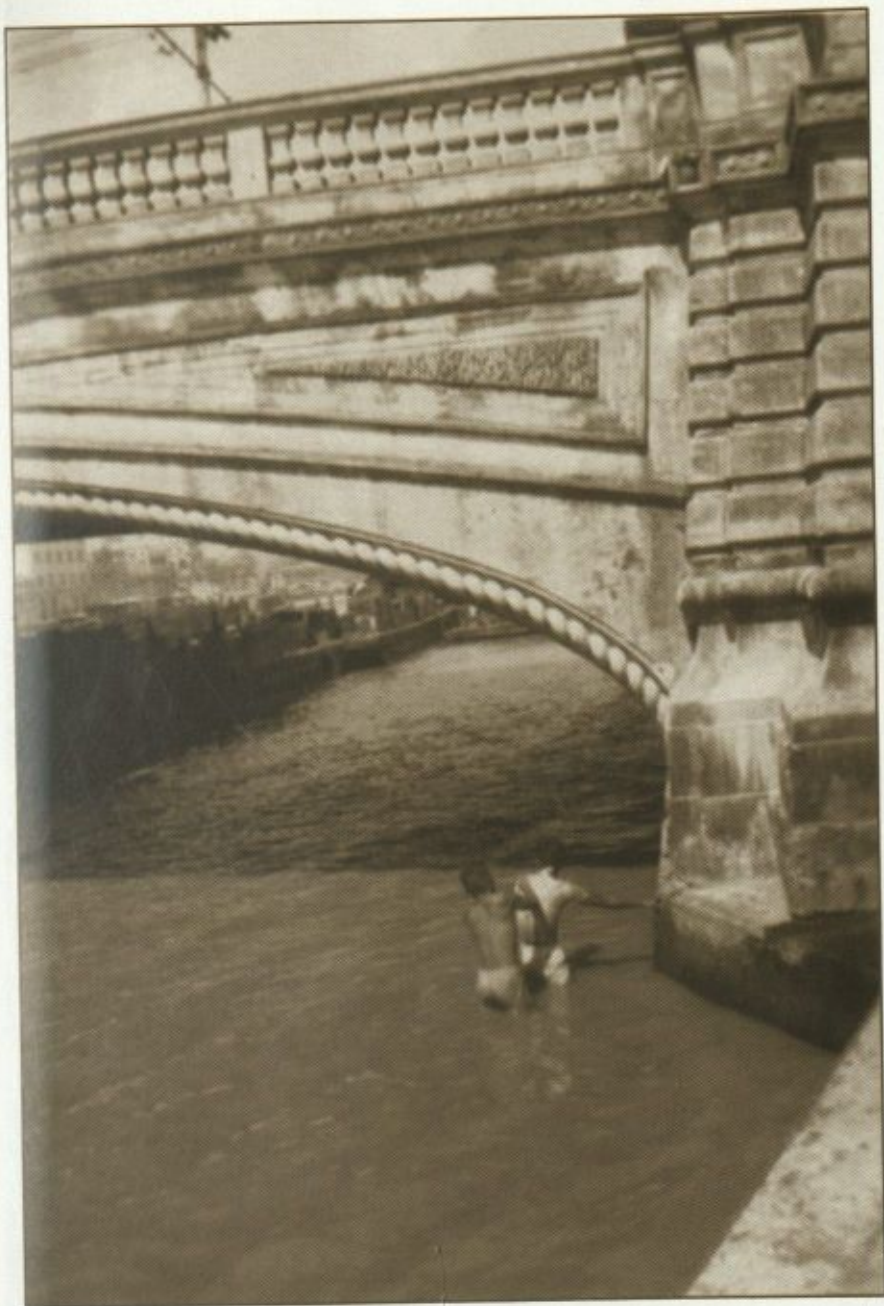
II. There are also photographs of men in Philippine Scout, Constabulary or Army uniforms.

The working and living conditions that Filipinos were subjected to, from the farms to the Navy, helped develop strong bonds of friendship and affection between these men. The all male barracks life, the difficult working conditions, the racism they faced in a foreign country created mutual help associations and personal camaraderie among them.

Innumerable heroic acts of giving up their lives for their fellow soldier have been recorded, such acts distinguished as love for country. Today, with deeper historical examination, many of the heroic sacrifices rendered by these soldiers were made for the love of each other as well.







Two men bathing together beneath Puente de Espana (Bridge of Spain),  
Pasig River, Manila, C. 1930





*Amading & Romy*

Inscribed: Amading and Romy.  
Posed at Lourdes Grotto, Baguio City, Philippines. C. 1955



Fan and unidentified movie actor, posed in front of billboard featuring matinee actor Efren Reyes, Sr., C. 1948



American and Filipino soldier.  
Probably Clark Air Base, Angeles, Pampanga, C. 1948





Anthropologist R.F. Barton with  
Ifugao friend, C. 1930

Barton was enamored with and did much  
field work among Northern Mountain Tribes.  
He would later write "The Half Way Sun"  
recounting life there.



Two gentlemen with canes and arms entwined. Site unidentified. C. 1915



Imprinted and inscribed front:  
San Francisco, Calif.

Sincerely Ben & Pet

Inscribed on verso:

Mar. 20, 1924

Dear Curing,

If you are half happy

To receive this simply Memory

As I am just in doing it

How very glad I'll be.

Original

Ben

Jonathan Best Collection







Two close friends. One with tie, the other with bowtie, c. 1918  
Embossed: The Fashion Studio, Escolta 39.

Inscription on verso:

To A. Esguerra

A.G.

Jonathan Best Collection



Before going upstairs, C. 1955



Fantasizing a cold night by a lake together, C. 1930

Embossed: Julio Valenzuela, Fotografia.

Inscription on verso:

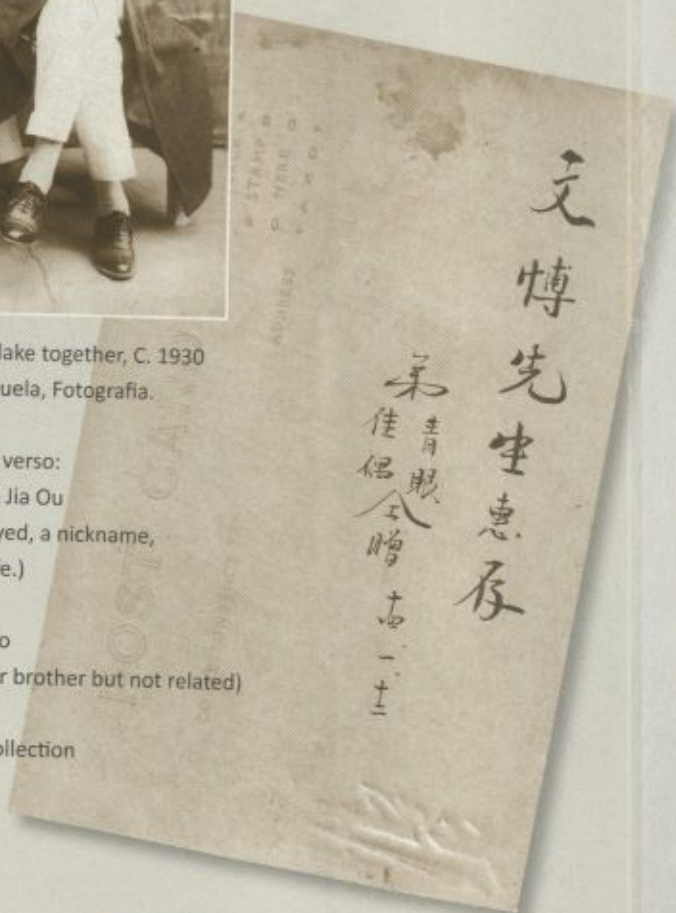
From Qing Yan Jia Ou

(literally means green-eyed, a nickname,  
and his wife.)

To Wen Bo

(addressed respectfully as younger brother but not related)

Jonathan Best Collection



文博先生惠存

弟青眼  
佳侶  
贈  
西一  
一





Filipino-Chinese teacher seated on Roman style chair and student, C. 1917



A seated graduate with his diploma and friend, c. 1915  
Embossed: Illegible Chinese characters.



Well groomed couple, one with tie, the other bowtie, one hand clasping the other.

Embossed: Sun Studio, 775 Juan Luna, Tondo

Inscription on verso:  
Manila, January 21, 1917  
To my dear aunt Salud  
Pepe

Jonathan Best Collection



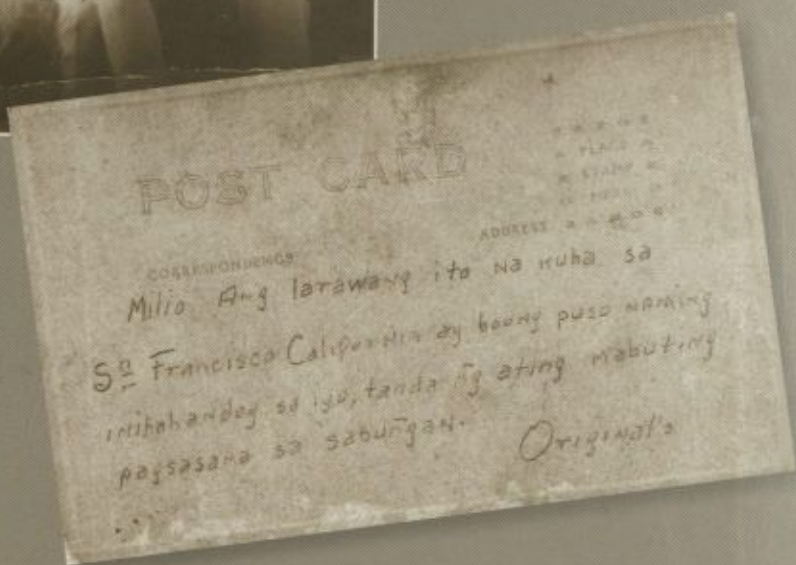


Two friends working abroad, both wearing identical sweaters, open shirt collars, C-1935

Inscription on verso:

*Milio, Ang larawan ito na kuha sa San Francisco, California ay buong puso naming inihahandag sa iyo, tandang ating mabuting pagsasama sa sabungan. Originals.*

(Milio, This picture taken in San Francisco, California is wholeheartedly given to you as a reminder of the times we were at the cockfights. Originals)



Close pals

Embossed: Sun Studio, Manila

Inscription on verso:

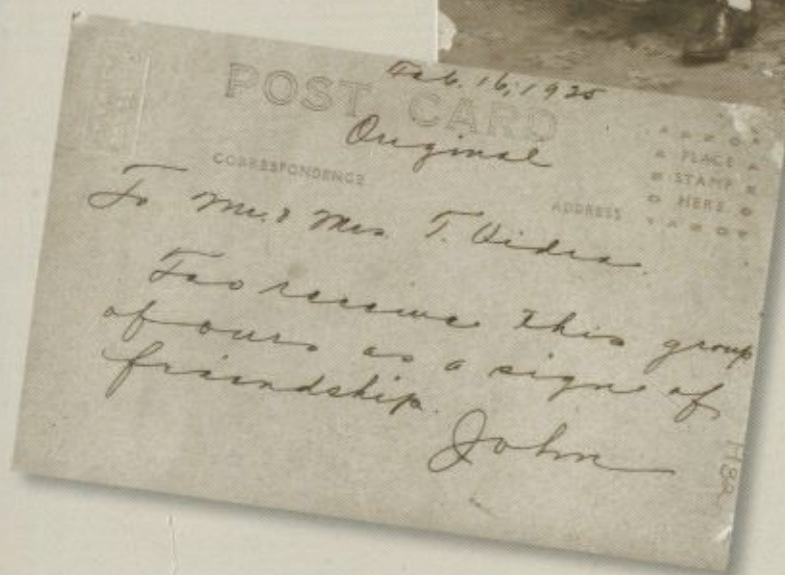
February 16, 1925

To Mr. & Mrs. T. Vidra

To receive this group of ours as a sign  
of friendship.

John

Embossed: Sun Studio, Manila

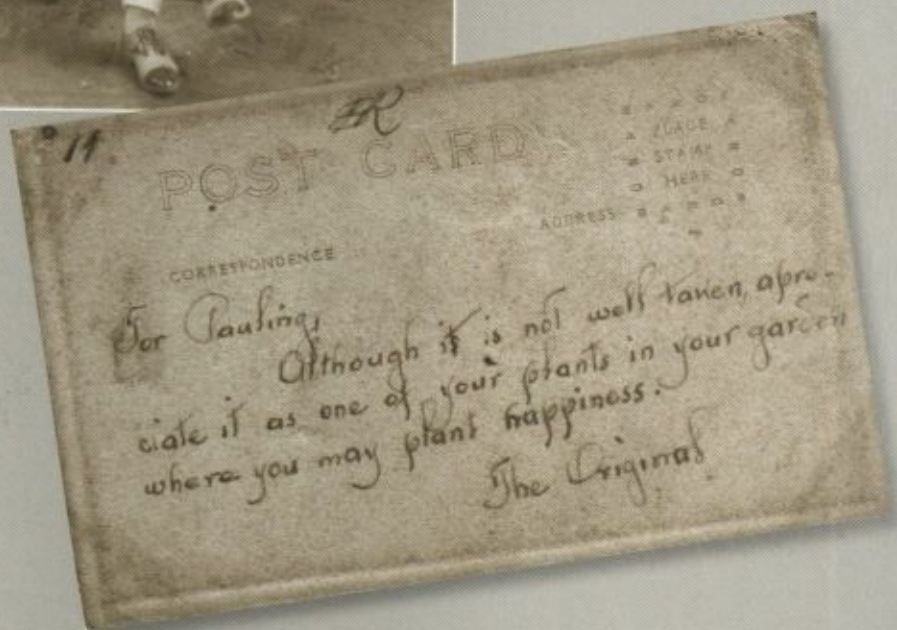




A restrained pose, C. 1916

Inscription on verso:

For Pauling,  
Although it is not well taken, appreciate it  
as one of your plants in your garden  
where you may plant happiness.  
The Original





Two hatted friends., C. 1914

Inscription on verso:

Dedicated to Choleng as a sign of our true,  
everlasting friendship.

Ino

Embossing illegible



Two brothers pose, C. 1923

Inscription on verso:

Heartily dedicated to you Pendo, as a  
recollection of eternal friendship.

Original

1. Jose M. De Fantar
2. Eugenio De Fantar

Addressed to:

Mr. Pedro Venezuela  
No. 730 Calle T. Alonso  
Sta. Cruz, Manila



POST CARD  
CORRESPONDENCE  
Heartily dedicated to you  
Pendo, as a recollection of eternal  
friendship.

ORIGINAL.

1. Jose M. De Fantar
2. Eugenio De Fantar

Mr. Pedro Venezuela  
No. 730 Calle T.  
Alonso, Sta. Cruz,  
M a n i l a.

1923



Two students holding sprays of flowers, C. 1912

Embossed: Quintana Studio, Manila





Sailors who've been around.

Inscription on verso:

September 25, 1914

Mr. F. Villanueva

Dear friend,

Compliment to dear friend.

Your friend,

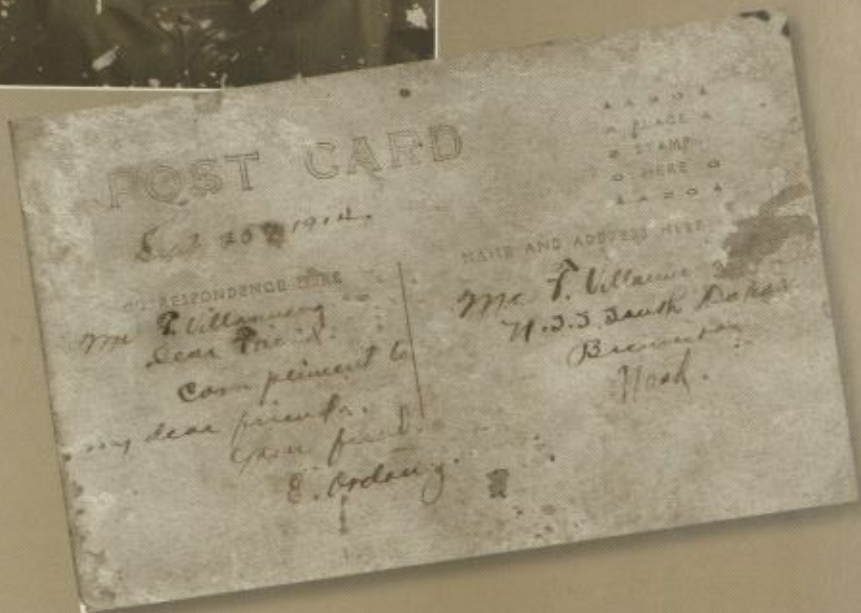
E. Ordonez

Addressed to:

Mr. F. Villanueva

U.S.S. South Dakota

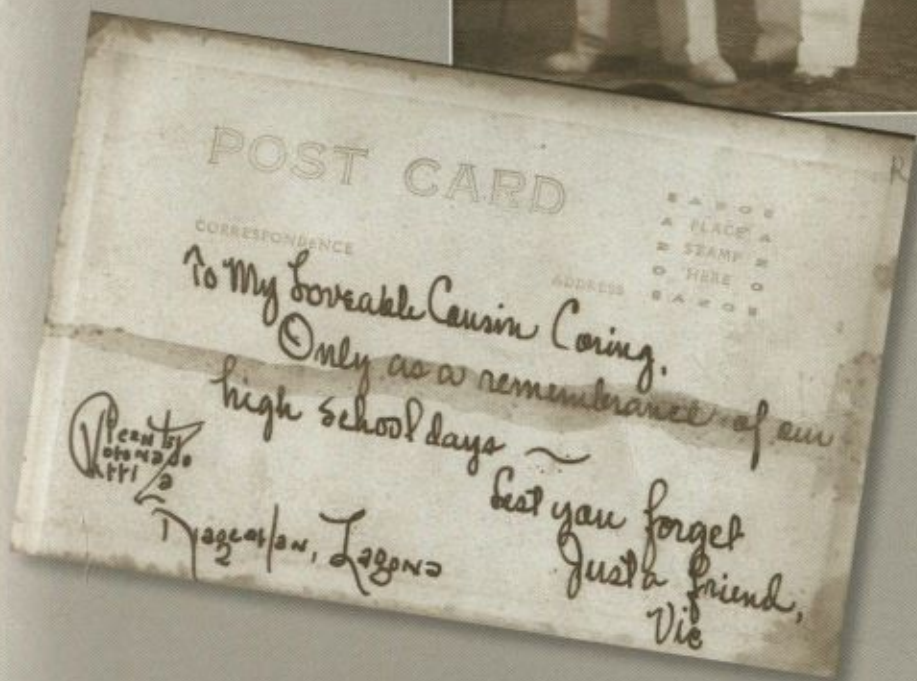
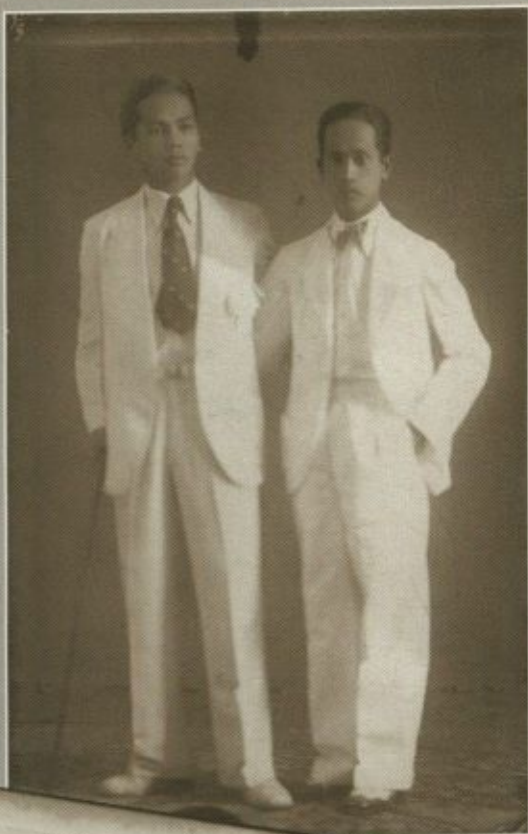
Bremerton, Washington



Smart looking but unsmiling. C. 1921

Inscription on verso:  
To My Loveable Cousin Coring,  
Only as a remembrance of  
our high school days.  
Lest you forget  
Just a friend,  
Vic

Nagcarlan, Laguna  
illegible lines







Leaning heads for best friends C. 1921





Two friends, same white suits, same ties, and rounded shirt collars.

Inscription on verso:

*Ala-ala ko sa akin mga pinsan*

Juan

Oct. 29, '17

(A memento for my cousins)

Addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Julio Esquirol

Jaen, Nueva Ecija

Embossed: Sun Studio, Manila

Two appealing gentlemen in bow-ties.



Inscription in verso:

*Ulang Apo, Agosto 3, 1914*

*Upang mapatunayan pa ang ating pagmamahal  
at huag mong wikaing di na kita pinasalamatan  
nitong pagkaka ekis "XX" ay eto at narito ang  
katunayan, at sampung nabihag ng iyong kalinisang  
pakikipagkilala ay na sa tabi mo at di na umi imik  
sapagkakasuko sa iyo.  
Ang sa iyo'y di lilimot.  
signature illegible*

(To verify my love and to prevent you from saying  
that I had no gratitude with this sign "XX", so here  
is the truth, and ten captured of those you know  
are beside you and do not utter a word having  
surrendered to you.

Yours who does not forget.

(Illegible signature)







Young men in identical wear and mutual affection.

Inscription on verso:  
Defaced message suggesting a different feeling.

Signed J.B. Morilla and  
addressed to Miss Eufrosina Almosin,  
Villasis, Pangasinan, P.I.

Embossed: GSISL (photo studio)







Two upright soldiers in a surreal landscape.  
Rocks drawn to cover chair and floor. C. 1914

Embossed: Maloleño Studio

An older gentleman with his ward  
who sits continental fashion  
on a Roman design chair.

Inscription on verso:

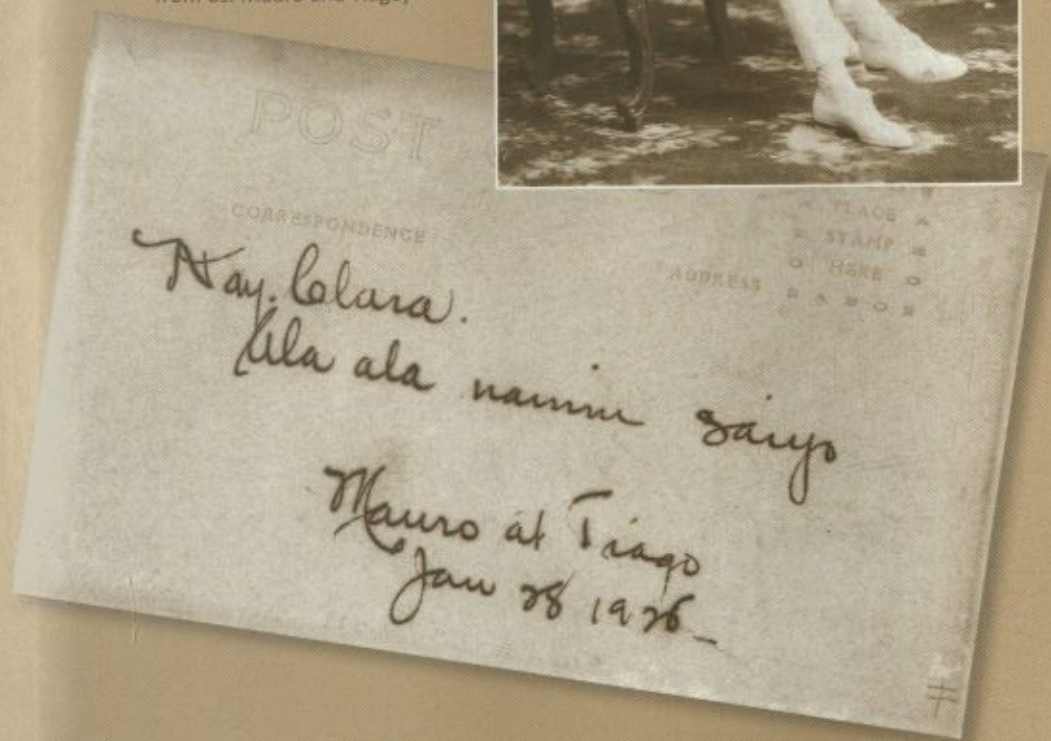
*Kay Clara*

*Ala ala namin saiyō.*

*Mauro at Tiago*

*Jan 28 1925*

(To Clara. A remembrance to you  
from us. Mauro and Tiago)







Two pals with a secret, C. 1948

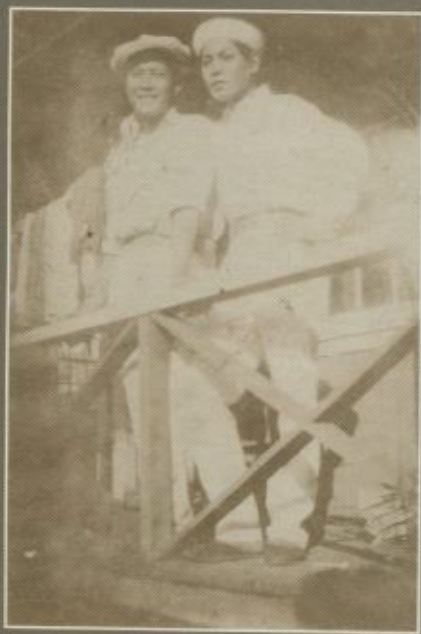
Inscription on verso:

Bebing, In the name of our friendship, please accept this portrait but consider it great  
for there is a hidden symbol in it. Your friend forever,  
Beny & Pit





Provincial gents in native attire, C. 1921



Tight friends in the morning. C. 1922.  
(Taken probably at a worker's barracks of a cannery or a fruit farm in the United States.)



Father in native attire, son in western look.

Inscription on verso:  
In Manila, Sept. 17, 1937





One of them is Kiko

Front imprint: Hollywood Studio

Inscription on verso:

My friend Kiko



An enduring friendship through a photo. Lakeside loggia backdrop. C. 1919

Inscription on verso:

Illegible message due to glue backing.

Signature: P. Jamero



Early Real Photo Postcard, white suits with high collars, both clutching Panama hats, one man seated on rattan chair. C. 1910.

Jonathan Best Collection



Gentlemen in white suits with ties.

Inscription on verso:

March 16, 1934

Cong Sixto,

To brother Sixto and family, this  
simple picture is heartily and sincerely  
dedicated.

One of the originals,  
Andoy

Embossed: Dreamland Studio, Manila





Two lads in kimono, c. 1920  
(It was popular then to have Japanese themed parties or to  
pose in studios wearing kimonos).





Two dear friends, C. 1916

Inscription on verso:

Sweet remembrance to you  
my dear friend. I am your friend.

A.A. Cruz

Imprint front: Arellano Studio, Manila, P.I.

Jonathan Best Collection







Well dressed in bow ties and white suits, C. 1922

Inscription on verso: *"Los que estan retratados"*

Embossed: Ideal de Dizon, Manila



Friends on a Chinese chair and a curtained backdrop, C. 1922



Affirming a friendship through a photograph, C. 1924

Inscribed on front: 1 & 2 over heads

Inscription on verso: Ramon and Javier, two friends forever.





Swarthy intimates with rings on their pinkies, C. 1920

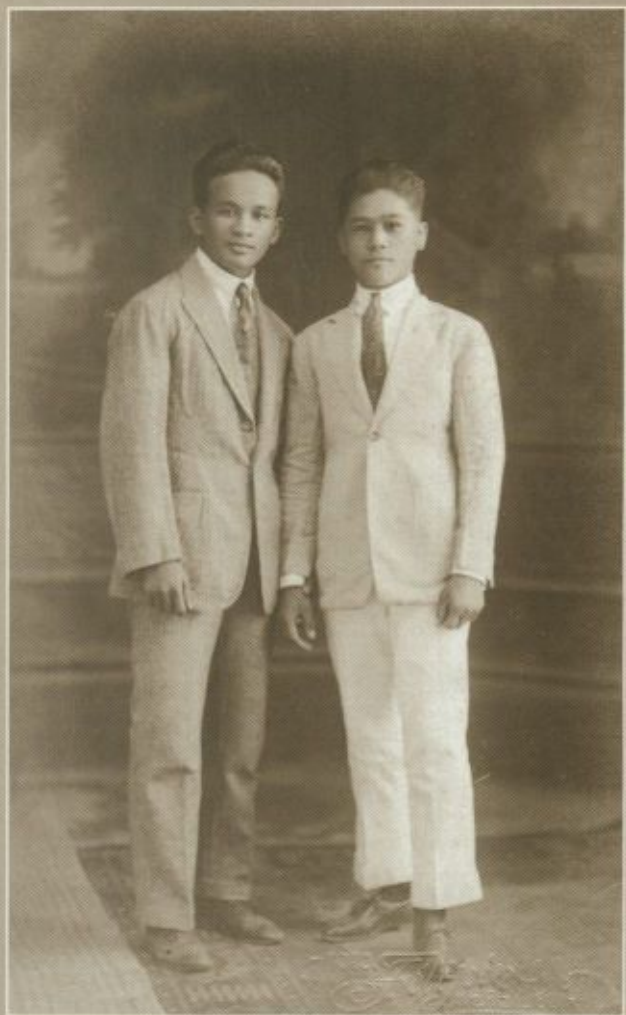
Embossed: Venus Studio, Manila



Teacher and student in continental pose.

Inscription on verso: Feb. 18, 1923, Dadong

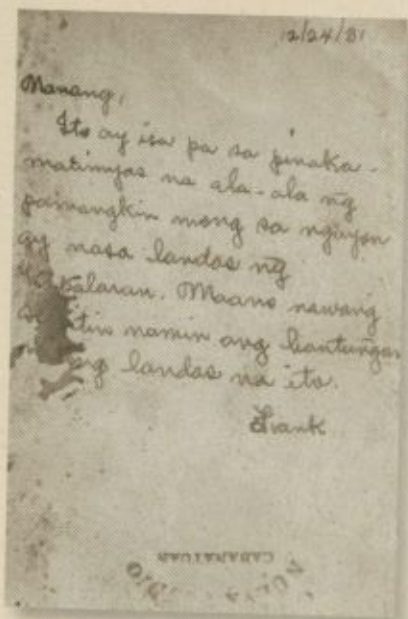
Embossed: Celia Studio



Young men furtively holding hands, C 1920

Embossed: Foto Filipinas, Ave. Rizal, 827





A parting photograph?

Inscription on verso:

12/24/31

Nanang, Ito ay isa pa sa pinakamatimyas na ala-ala ng pamangkin mong  
sa ngayon ay nasa landas ng capalaran. Maano nawang sapitin namin  
ang hantungan nitong landas na ito. Frank  
(Nanang, this is a memento from your nephew on the trail to good fortune.  
We accept wherever the end of this trail leads us. Frank)

Stamp on back: Nolva Studio, Cabanatuan

A priest and his loyal novitiate.

Inscription on verso:

February 21, 1938

To Miss Caluag

With the best wishes for a

Most Happy Birthday.

Signature illegible

Embossed: Central Art Studio,

Cabanatuan N.E.





Two Filipino sailor friends from the U.S.S. Saratoga, C. 1928

Inscription on verso:

*Aquin alala sa aquin paisana dito sa Shanghai.*

Emilio L. Ginete



Two brothers posed under  
a cherry tree, C. 1930

Inscription on verso:  
*Un humilde recuerdo de Amistad y  
Cariño a la Familia de Tío Mino.  
Recaredo & Felix*





Two Musketeers, C. 1921

Inscription on verso:

Two Musketeers are in no danger so long as we talk our love but to write them (sic)  
are to impale ourselves on our own pot. hook!

The Two Musketeers

(Note: Three Musketeers, the movie, was a hit when shown in 1921 in Manila.)



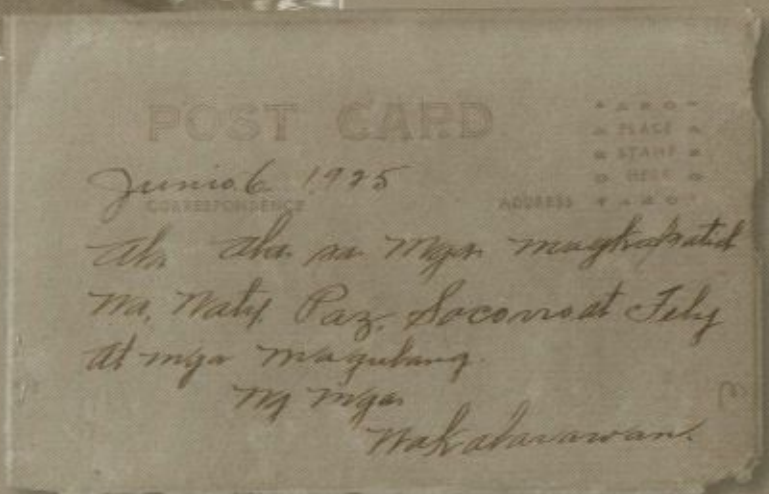
Graduation photo for the young man  
seated with diploma.

Inscription on verso:

*Junio 6, 1935*

*Ala ala sa mga magkapatid. Wa, Naty,  
Paz, Socorro at Fely at mga magulang ng  
mga nakalarawan.*

(A remembrance for siblings, Wa, Naty,  
Paz, Socorro and Fely and the parents of  
those pictured here)







Bosom buddies with a "perm" C. 1933

Embossed: Universal Studio, Gapan Nueva Ecija  
(Having a hair wave or "perm" became popular in the 1930's)



Buddies direct gaze at the camera, C. 1921

Embossed: Triangulo Studio, Manila



College remembrance, C. 1951





Soulmates.

Inscription on verso:

Kay Jeneri Tanda ng pagmamahal co sa iyo. Matias

Sept. 16, 1918

(To Jeneri, a memento of my love for you. Matias)

Embossed: Foto Filipinas, Ave. Rizal, 827



SEASIDE ST. LOUIS, MO.  
 DEAREST SIS CION,  
 I am now in every way ready to fight for a place in this world. I'll soon start elbowing my way up to the top thru rough obstacles - and like a man I'm confident of triumph. But lest I receive the essential aid my castles in the air would crumble into pieces and a sad scene of failure would spread before my sight and yours. And this aid cannot be had from other people but my own dear Sisters. I only wish you to take care of my Mother while I'm having a square fight for a place for us all. Kindly never forget this. Noy 12/28/19

Two navy buddies

Inscribed front: U.S.S. Idaho, San Pedro, Cal.

Inscription on verso:

Dearest Sis Cion,

I am now in every way ready to fight for a place in this world. I'll soon start elbowing my way up to the top thru rough obstacles, - and like a man I'm confident of triumph. But lest I receive the essential aid my castles in the air would crumble into pieces and a sad scene of failure would spread before my sight and yours. And this aid cannot be had from other people but my own dear Sisters. I only wish you to take care of my Mother while I'm having a square fight for a place for us all. Kindly never forget this.

Noy 12/28/19



Two mates in a floral scene, C. 1919

Inscription on verso:

Remember me when far away  
Remember me when thou art sad  
And in your heart  
Burry (sic) these words "Forget Me Not"  
Forget the gift but not the giver.  
Tranquillino Bautro

Addressed to Mr. V.R. Gutierrez  
Lobo, Batangas







The end of a friendship? C. 1927

Inscription on verso:

San Jose \_\_\_\_\_

Mar. 2 \_\_\_\_\_

To (name erased)

As a remembrance

From, J.N. Cobangbang

\_\_\_\_\_ Pangasinan



An assured man with his abiding friend,  
C. 1936

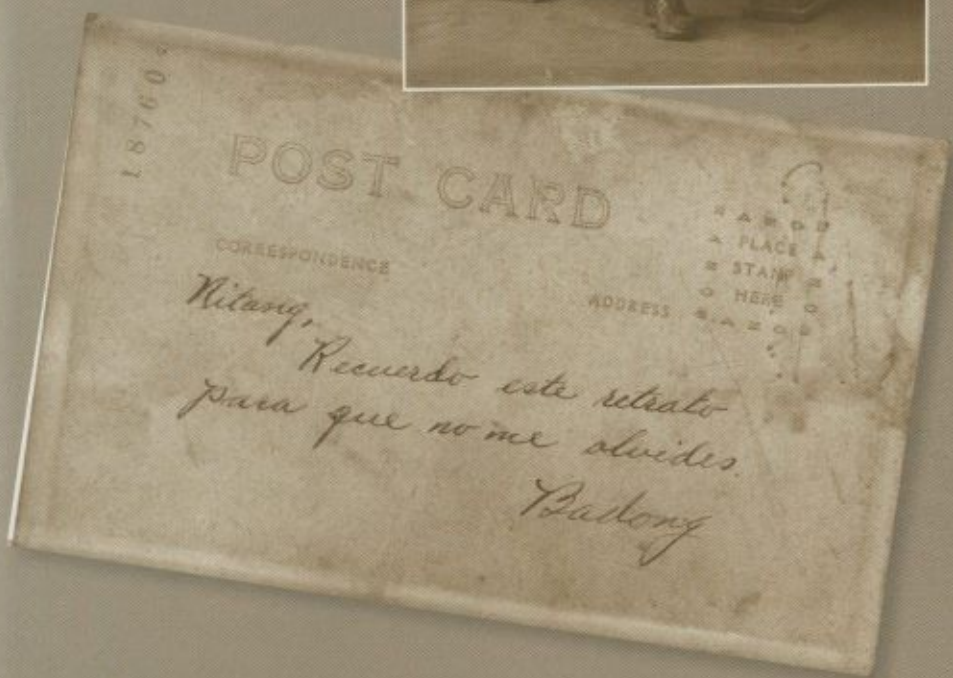
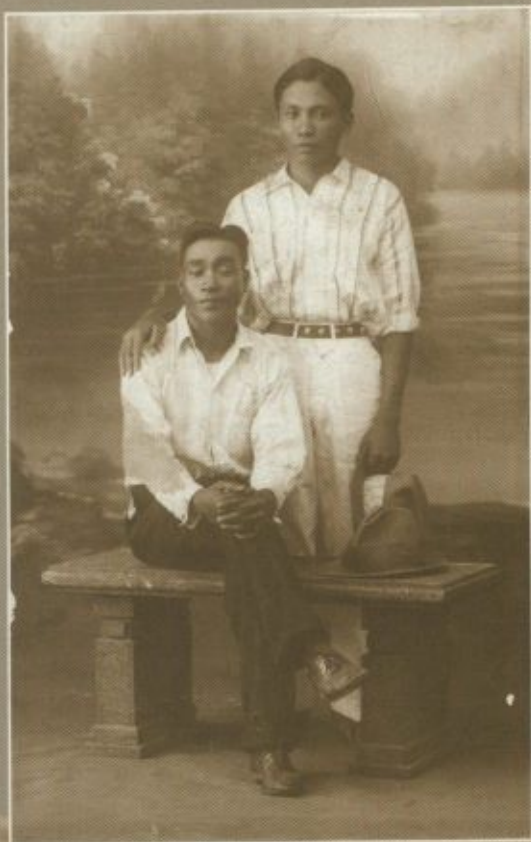
Inscription on verso:

*Nitang,*

*Recuerdo este retrato para que  
no me olvides.*

*Badong*

Embossed: Nueva Studio. Nueva 605  
and 250 Ongpin, Manila, P.I.







The Filipino friendship photo, from native garb to provincial backdrop.

Inscription on verso: Faded line... Ang Aking ala ala Faded line...  
(...My remembrance...)





Bosom friends with two tone Oxford shoes.  
Loggia backdrop.

Inscription on verso:

Aug. 30, 1934

To Telang

Have this memento as a sign of true friendship  
and as well as an everlasting remembrance.

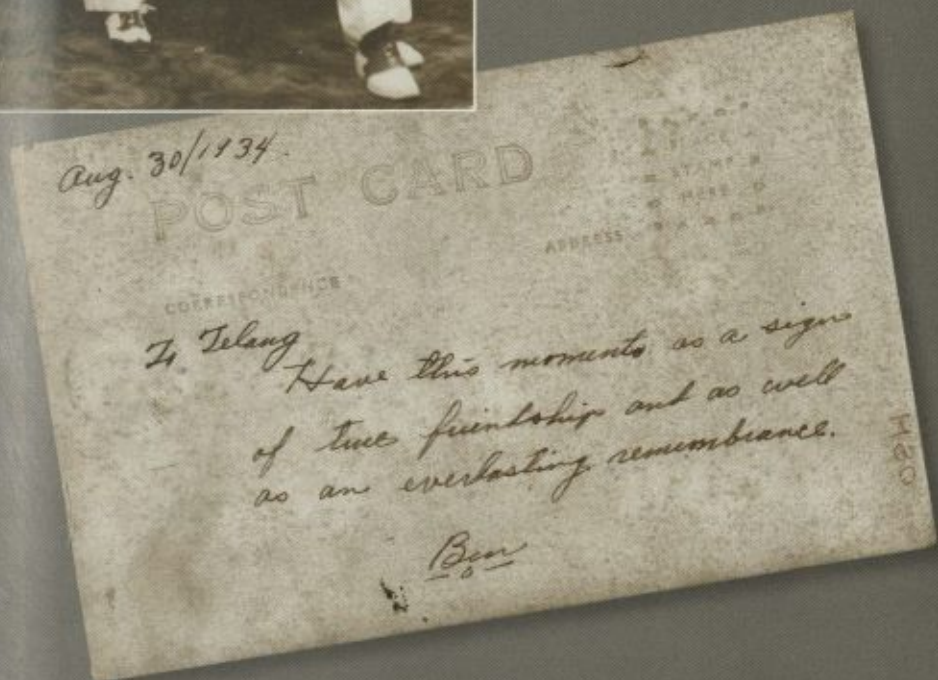
Ben

Embossed:

Luna Studio

2283 Azcarraga

Sampaloc





Affectionate reminder, C. 1933

Inscription on verso:

A sweet remembrance to you my dear  
friend Busiong.  
Pindoy

Addressed: Mr. A. Liwag  
Gapan, N.E.

Embossed: Modelo Filipino



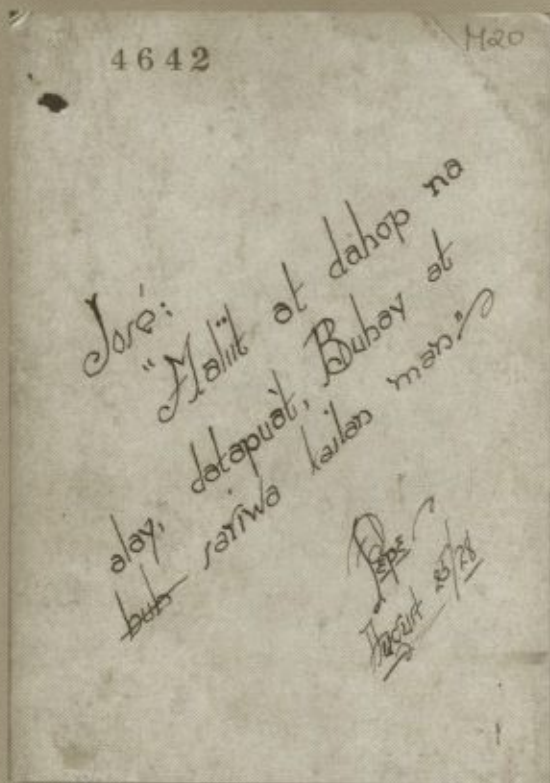




Two brothers in native garb from Bulacan province, C. 1922

Imprint front: V. Cadix Studio  
Meyc. Bul. (Meycayauan, Bulacan)





From Pepe to Jose.

Inscription on verso:

Jose:

"Maliit at dahop na alay, datapuot, Buhay at sariwa kailan man."

Pepe

August 25, 1928

(Petite and needy souvenir, nevertheless, alive and timely as ever.

Embossed: Sun Studio Manila







Sailors beginning the night, the middle being the prize, C. 1950



# Group Poses



Photographs with three or more subjects often have a distinct air of levity and a greater show of camaraderie and affection. The exceptions are late 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs where the poses are formal and stiff. In the early days nervous subjects had to stand perfectly still for as long as sixteen seconds. Smiling for the camera would come much later, around the 1910's when film with faster exposure times were developed enabling more outdoor shots and a greater variety of natural poses.

The United States promoted universal education in the Philippines and sent hundreds of American teachers to establish an extensive public school system and trade schools throughout the archipelago. Almost overnight, tens of thousands of children, young men and women were in classes. Group photos became one of the rituals of graduation and semester breaks. Given the large size of most classes and limited indoor lighting, the photographs were usually set outdoors in front of the school.

One photograph in this chapter shows a Filipina teacher surrounded by her students posed in rows, the girls in front and the boys in the back. They may have been prodded by the photographer or the teacher to pose endearingly, their heads touching one another.

In another group photo of male students posing with baskets they've just woven in trade school, smiles appear, and in the back row, two boys are caught by the camera tenderly leaning their heads together.

There are countless group photos of Filipinos at family gatherings, association meetings, company outings, sports events and the ubiquitous congregations of diners.

Pictures of group outings to the beach, to picnic spots, to waterfalls and riversides are aplenty. Baguio, Antipolo and Taygaytay were as popular then as they are today. These photographs show the happiest of faces.

More formal photographs for fraternal associations, clubs and various government services, departments or businesses were also significant in number. Curiously, it is in the midst of such group poses that two men would sometimes spontaneously embrace each other to show off their shared affection. Hands were held, arms entwined or wrapped around each other's waists, shoulders and necks embraced affectionately and legs pressed against welcoming thighs. Perhaps such affection was displayed because the bonhomie of a familiar group allowed it. Or, being part of a large crowd, posing intensely for the camera, two men could, in a moment of truth, celebrate and record their affection for each other.



Delivery men (repartidores) for the newspaper Diario de Manila, C. 1880

Attributed to Francisco Van Camp

(The Spanish newspaper lasted close to 50 years and closed in 1898. Many of its workers including these men were members of the secret revolutionary organization Katipunan which later led the revolt against Spain)





Hats and handshakes, C. 1935





Bocaue Elementary School boys in their basket weaving class, C. 1917

Jonathan Best Collection



The seated one lords over the others, C. 1936



Celebrating Rizal Day, San Francisco, California, C. 1937





Chinese-Filipinos posed with a  
palm tree backdrop.

Inscribed in front:

Illegible signature

June 10, 1945

Inscription on verso:

The names of the sitters:

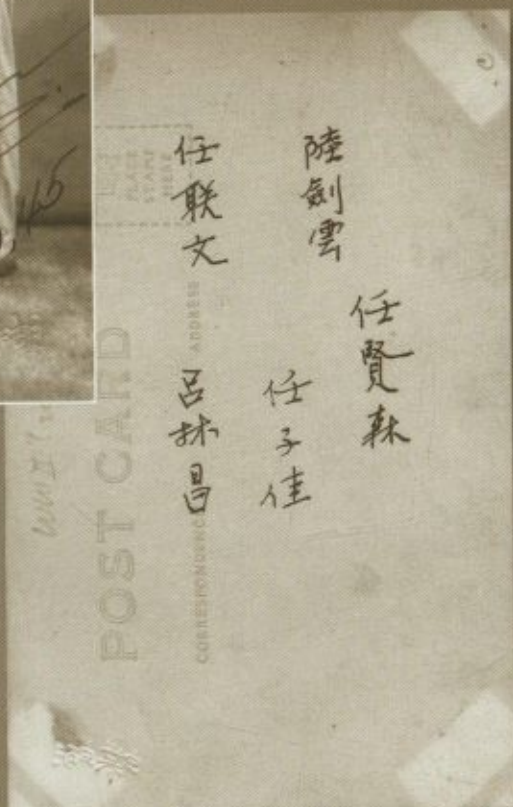
任联文 REN LIAN WEN

陆剑云 LU JIAN YUN

吕林昌 LU LIN CHANG

任子佳 REN ZI JIA

任贤林 REN XIAN LIN





Friends on a boat excursion, C. 1922





The suitor seated on a Roman design chair with his fellow mates.

Inscription on verso:

When you are under the shady darkness  
of solitude (sic) and full of sentiments  
and curious sorrows,

Raise these (sic) picture dear friend  
and will denotes, to show the way to  
happiness and not for (the) grave.

Your friend,  
F. Zamora

Addressed to:  
Miss Agripina Pineda  
Bayambang, Pangasinan, P.I.







Friends visiting the province, C. 1922



A reunion of close friends.

Inscription on verso:

12/14/21

A remembrance to my dear cousin Loreto.

P. Maniquiz





Two hunters and their guide, at rest, C. 1920





Love's exuberance in the midst of formality, C. 1921  
(As an American colony, western dressing occurred more rapidly  
with men than with women.)



Three happy mates on a raft, beach unknown, C. 1927





The author's grandfather, Juan Ledesma (middle) and two new friends from a Filipino orchestra, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1926.





A tender moment before departure, C. 1936

Imprint on front: Maligayang Picnic ng Philippine Match Co. sa Navotas, Rizal

(Happy picnic of the Philippine Match Co. at Navotas, Rizal)

(Navotas with its rivers and shoreline was a favorite tourist destination  
in the 1930's for Manilans)



POLICE FORCE OF C. L. A. S. MUNOZ, N. E.

POST CARD

RETURN  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE  
RETURN  
ADDRESS

CORRESPONDENCE

*This picture is affectionately  
dedicated to my best friend  
Vicente Gutierrez.*

*Petronilo Panganiban*

Handholding and embrace in the force, C. 1916  
Imprint on front: Police Force of C. L. A. S. Munoz, N. E.

Inscription on verso: This picture is affectionately  
dedicated to my best friend Vicente Gutierrez.

Petronilo Panganiban





To Badong from Geronimo, C. 1920

Inscription on verso:

Dear Badong:

Receive this unworthy picture as  
a token of our true friendship.

Your friend,

Geronimo D. Sackar

# POST CARD

CORRESPONDENCE

ADDRESS

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE  
RETURN  
TO  
RECEIVER

Dear Badong:

Receive this unworthy picture  
as a token of true friendship.

Your friend,  
Geronimo D. Sackar.



Students in camisa de Chino, C. 1912

Inscription on verso:

Maming,

*Tanggapin mo itong aming maralitang  
larawan, tanda nag di paglimot o, ni  
\_\_\_\_\_ mag-pakaikailanman.*

(Maming: Take our poor image, so as not  
to forget us or not to \_\_\_\_\_ forever.

The ones who \_\_\_\_\_,

Reming)





Buccolic scene with ardor.

Inscription on verso:

April 15, 1926 For Sebio, This picture has my soul and fate. Oyang





A Gentleman and his two wards, straw hats reposed in the foreground, C. 1920

(Backdrop has the outline of the Pasig River lighthouse)





A Philippine Scout and his companions.

Inscription on verso: A remembrance for someone with goodness in his heart.

10-25-18 Addressed to: Mr. and Mrs. E. Esquivel, Jaen, N.E.

Embossed: J.M. Bayot, Photo Studio Manila, P.I.



Marzo 10, 1929.  
 To remind brother Quicoy  
 of his loving brother  
 Badong here in the city  
 of Manila.  
 Brother Badong X

A "spontaneous" shot and reminder  
 Inscription front: "x" on cuff of man on the left.

Inscription on verso:  
 Marzo 10, 1929  
 To remind brother Quicoy of his loving brother Badong here in the city of Manila.  
 Brother Badong X





Young men with moonlight backdrop and faux stones in the foreground. C. 1932

Embossed: Nacional Studio, 921 Ilaya, Tondo





Men of the Faith

Inscription on verso:

*Dedico este modesto retrato a mis buenas amigas Manuela, Mercedes y Matilde Santos  
con sintesis del amor sincero y gran estima que les profeso.*

*A. Riva Abril 28, 1919*

Embossed: H. Kawabata, Calbayog, Samar, P.I.

Jonathan Best Collection



Three compatriots abroad, C. 1938



Three distinct poses, C. 1934





Poses of sincerity,  
loggia backdrop. C. 1910

Inscription on verso:  
*Turnina, Boon puso kong ipinagcacaloob  
sa iyo intong aming larawan naming  
magcaibigan.  
Ang iyang pinsan  
Antonio Rojas*

(Turnina, My whole heart for you is in  
this picture with my friends.  
Your cousin,  
Antonio Rojas)





Three bespectacled and armed forest rangers.

Imprint front: Land Classification Party, 1925-1928 of the  
Bureau of Forestry at Western Pangasinan Prov.

Inscription on verso:

Querido hermano y hermana, Recuerdo de su hermano, Ceto  
12-5-25

Embossed: Isla Studio, \_\_\_ Pang.





Dapper gentlemen in relaxed pose, C. 1932  
(The ties may have been borrowed since one is a bit too short)





A bonding pose between boys and between girls.

Inscription on verso:

Oct. 3, 1930

To dear Antang with love.

F. Rica



The cabo (foreman), front and middle, with his crew.

Imprint on front:

We can't say anything but we still (sic) remembered ours stays in this  
construction - cabo, Benjamin Pedro (Photo - E. Arcilla)





Shipmates gone camping.

Imprint on front:

First overnight hike and camping of S.S. Agaoco Ship 4+8, Antipolo Rizal  
May 28th to June 1st, 1940. Rizal Studio, Antipolo, Rizal

Jonathan Best Collection





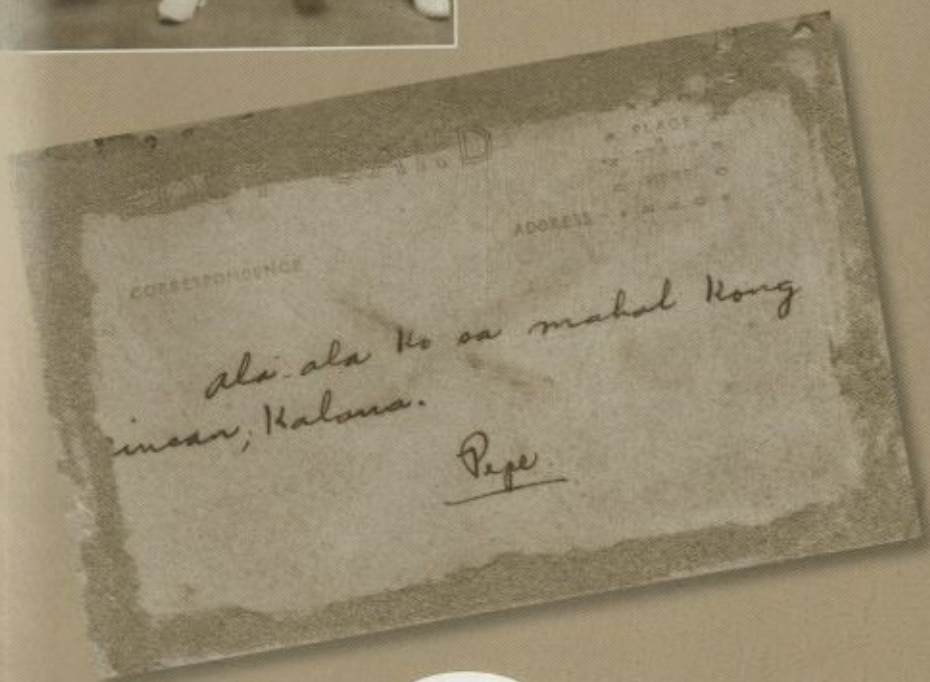
Summertime and guys on a boulder by the river, C. 1929



Seated older gentleman and companions,  
C. 1934

Inscription on verso:  
*Ala ala ko sa mahal kong pinsan, Kalana.*  
Pepe

(a remembrance for Kalana,  
a cousin I love, Pepe)





Three buddies in Burnham Park, Baguio City C. 1964

Jonathan Best Collection





Hunks on parade, Matabungkay Beach, Batangas, C. 1959



University friends, posed with Chinoiserie influenced window backdrop. C. 1940

Inscription on verso:

1. Victoriano Cuvos; 2. Jose Evangelista; 3. Felix Pagurin; 4. Felipe Papa



# Epilogue



Manifestations of male affection appearing in photographs changed rapidly over the span of a century, from the 1890's to the 1990's. Faster shutter speeds, roll film, commercially available photographic paper, the silver nitrate process which quickened film developing, and the availability of inexpensive cameras signaled the end of the photo studio as the principal site for endearing poses.

"Spontaneous" or "stolen" shots, terms once used to refer to carefree candid images, whimsical moments with smiles all around, became the norm. Cameras were brought on excursions to beaches, riversides, and to the mountain city of Baguio and picture taking became an ever-present activity.

The "sexual revolution" of the 1960's and 1970's further eased, if not eliminated the last restraints on open displays of affection. The measured squeeze of another's shoulder, the hidden hand resting on a friend's back, the loving gaze at the camera would be replaced with a greater visibility of physical closeness and direct gazes at one another.

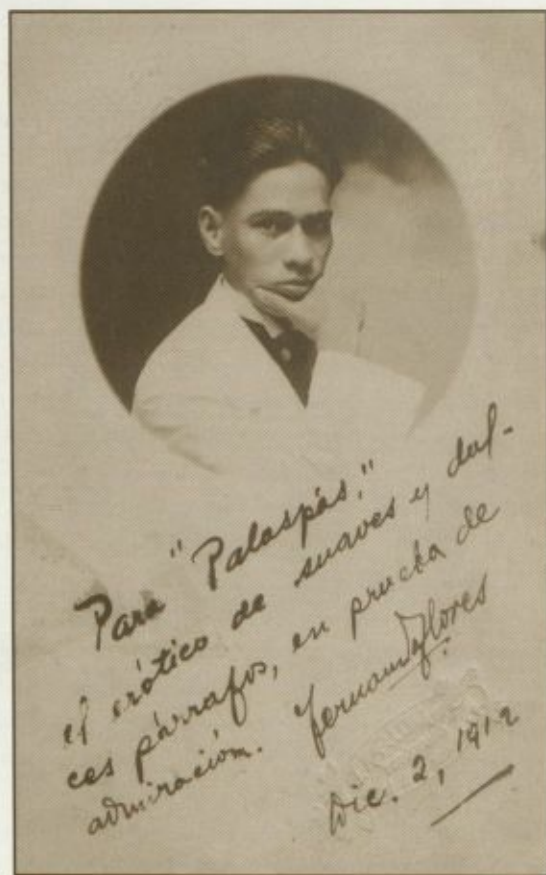
The Gay Liberation and the Women's Movement helped bring out into the open what was once only revealed by furtive glances, a touch of the hand or a "comradely" arm over the shoulders. What was once heartfelt but ambiguous could now be openly expressed. There would be no more doubts as to the meaning of solid embraces and outright kisses between men in gay enclaves and pride marches.

The new openness of the 1960's and the general liberalization of society compelled even staunchly heterosexual men worldwide to be more emotionally demonstrative and affectionate with their male friends. Kisses and joyful embraces among men are commonplace now on soccer fields, awarding ceremonies and even in church rituals.



(Curiously, the advent of marriages between men, the anniversary celebrations, and gay couples adopting children have caused a slight revival of the formal portraiture either in or outside the studio.)

If you have a gift of discernment, "gaydar" in the homosexual vernacular, you can spot the men with bravura, men with seductive allure, men about to bag a conquest and men in love. In the shadow world we once inhabited, we became quite astute in perceiving concealed feelings, meaningful glances and the enticing gaze. These old photographs contain only abiding affections, visual memories of loves suspected, hidden, and dismissed, but not forgotten.



Cryptic and intense. Inscription on front: *Para "Palaspas," el erotico de suaves es dulces parrafos, en prueba de admiracion.* (For your hands to be busy with, you sexy, sweet

talker, proof of my admiration.) Fernando Flores, Dec. 2, 1912

Embossed: T. Kapulong Fotografo, Manila, I.F. (Islas Filipinas)

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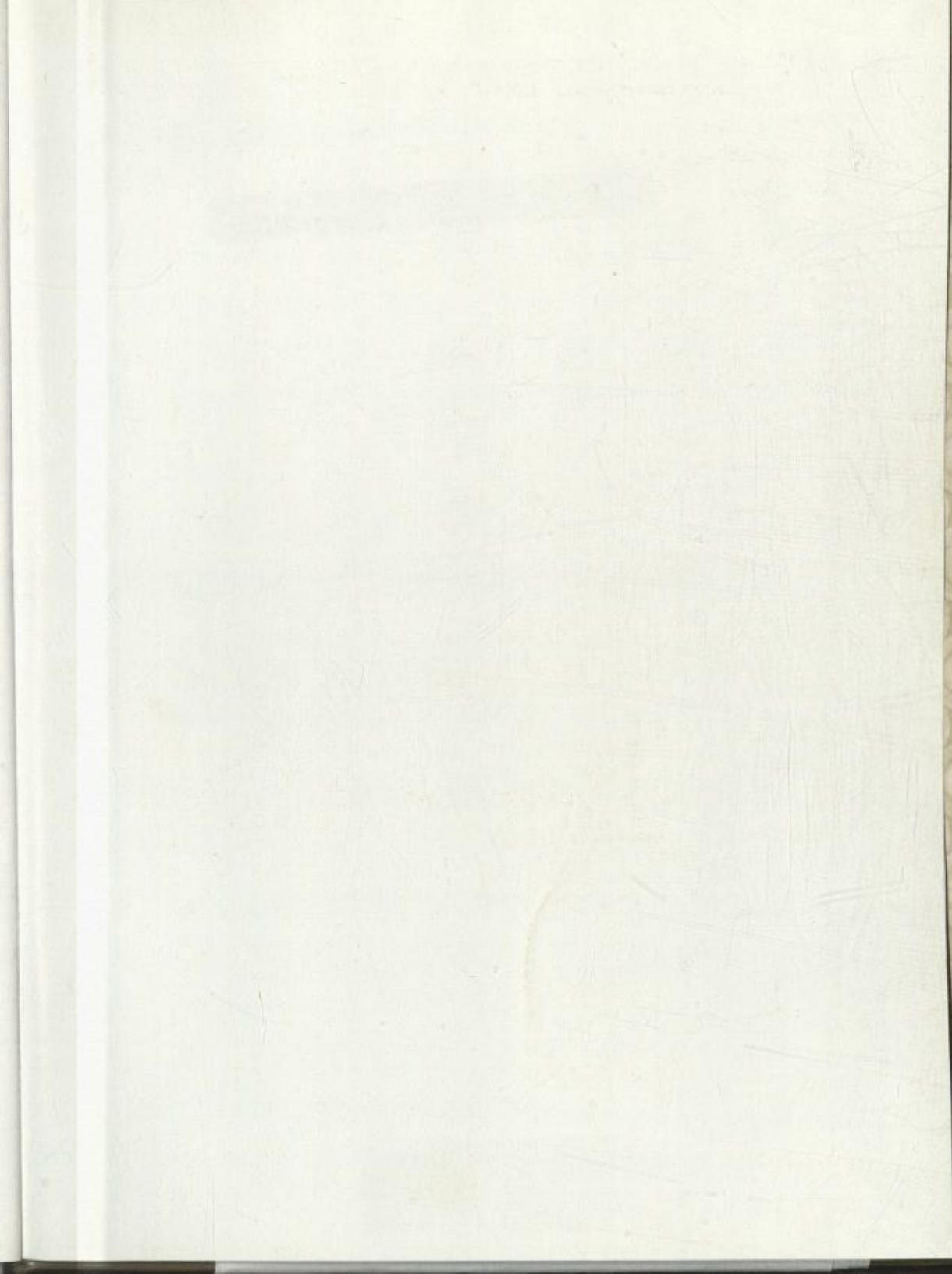
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Handholding to the future. Circa 1914.







JOHN L. SILVA was born in Iloilo, Philippines and is a collector of vintage photographs and writes on the subject for various publications. He also writes on cultural matters, heritage and history, much of it in relation to photographs. Mr. Silva has curated photography shows in the United States and the Philippines.

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